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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SKOPJE 000842

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SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: DAS DICARLO'S OCTOBER 10 MEETINGS WITH  
OPPOSITION LEADERS

REF: SKOPJE 815

Classified By: P/E CHIEF SHUBLER, REASONS 1.4 (B) & (D).

SUMMARY.

11. (SBU) During a meeting with DAS DiCarlo in Skopje on October 10, opposition DUI President Ahmeti said implementation of the May 29 Agreement was moving too slowly, and that he would ask governing VMRO for a deadline for concrete results from ongoing working group discussions. He was non-committal about DUI's return to all institutions of parliament until after an investigative committee produces a report on the September 25 brawl between MPs. Ahmeti said DUI would play a constructive role in strengthening stability in Macedonia in the runup to a Kosovo status solution.

12. (C) In a separate meeting with DAS DiCarlo on the same day, opposition SDSM President Sekerinska disagreed with the DUI position on the May 29 Agreement's requirement for a draft language law, characterizing the DUI version of the law as too intrusive in its reach into state institutions. She contended that PM Gruevski believes a membership invitation at the 2008 NATO Summit is virtually guaranteed because of regional stability concerns related to Kosovo, which she suggested was undermining the political will to proceed with tough reforms. Sekerinska also accused the government of using non-transparent funding for elaborate PR campaigns to put SDSM at a competitive disadvantage on the political stage. End Summary.

#### MEETINGS WITH DUI AND SDSM OPPOSITION

13. (U) EUR DAS DiCarlo, accompanied by Ambassador and EconOff (notetaker) met separately with DUI President Ahmeti and with opposition SDSM President Sekerinska on October 10 in Skopje. Sekerinska was accompanied by SDSM Parliamentary Coordinator Makraduli, and DUI was accompanied by DUI VP Arifi, DUI Presidency member Xhaferi, and Ahmeti's Chief of Staff.

#### MAY 29 AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION -- SPLIT OPPOSITION

14. (SBU) DAS DiCarlo told both Ahmeti and Sekerinska that implementation of the May 29 Agreement between DUI and governing VMRO was essential, but that DUI had to show flexibility in pursuing a compromise outcome. Ahmeti complained that the May 29 Agreement working groups on a draft language law and social package for victims of the 2001 conflict were moving too slowly. As a result, DUI was going to propose deadlines for demonstrating concrete progress in

the working groups. Ahmeti doubted whether PM Gruevski was in fact interested in NATO and EU membership, since he was not, in Ahmeti's view, serious about implementing the May 29 Agreement.

15. (SBU) SDSM President Sekerinska said that her party opposed DUI's draft language law proposal which would allow the use of Albanian for internal government functions. She agreed, however, that SDSM could accept DUI's proposal for the central government to interact with ethnic Albanians in the Albanian language. She disagreed with Ahmeti about the GOM's attitude toward NATO, but added that PM Gruevski was convinced Macedonia would be invited to join the Alliance because of regional security considerations related to Kosovo.

#### DUI'S RETURN TO PARLIAMENTARY INSTITUTIONS

16. (SBU) Referring to the September 25 brawl in parliament between DUI and governing coalition partner DPA (ref A), DAS DiCarlo noted the damage that incident had done to Macedonia's image. She asked whether DUI was reconsidering its decision to suspend participation in plenary sessions of parliament until a parliamentary investigative committee completed its report on the incident, as DUI had initially said would be the case. Ahmeti was non-committal. He said that DUI would shoulder its share of the blame for its involvement in the brawl, but would insist that the committee finger the culprits responsible for attacks on two DUI MPs that day.

#### INFLUENCE ON NATO PROSPECTS

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17. (C) SDSM's Sekerinska said the September 25 events were a symptom of "stalemate and a lack of trust" produced by an inefficient parliament that had managed to accomplish very little legislative business. Legislation related to NATO and EU membership was sidetracked as a result. She doubted the investigative committee would produce a balanced report, noting the completely different versions of events presented by each side.

18. (C) Sekerinska worried that the brawl and other developments would convince some NATO observers that Macedonia was an unpredictable, unstable Balkan country. The Greeks would attempt to use that negative image to undermine the country's NATO candidacy, rather than relying solely on arguments about the name.

19. (SBU) DAS DiCarlo asked Sekerinska whether she could not help persuade DUI to resume its work in all bodies of parliament. Sekerinska said she had tried, but that hard-line elements in DUI had pressured Ahmeti to hold the line by pointing out that compromise approaches had failed to budge VMRO from its intransigence toward DUI.

#### KOSOVO -- READY TO WORK FOR STABILITY

110. (C) DAS DiCarlo underscored to Ahmeti the importance of a calm, stable environment in Macedonia in the runup to a Kosovo status decision, and especially the need to avoid any calls from Macedonia for referenda on changing borders (as had been the case in the isolated border town of Tanusevci several weeks ago.) Ahmeti agreed that DUI would do the necessary to keep the situation calm in Macedonia. "Just tell us what our duties will be" he told DAS DiCarlo, pledging that the party would fulfill them.

#### GOM PR SPENDING PUTS SDSM AT COMPETITIVE DISADVANTAGE

111. (SBU) Sekerinska bemoaned the competitive disadvantage her party was at because of non-transparent GOM spending on PR campaigns. She suggested that such spending included outright bribery or other methods of influencing media

outlets and shaping their messages. New legislation was required to control and regulate the manner in which the government could spend on self-promoting PR activities, she said.

¶12. (U) DAS DiCarlo cleared this message.  
MILOVANOVIC